

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ABIDJAN 000695

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DAKAR FOR OFDA/WARO DAVIS
ROME FOR FODAG
GENEVA FOR RMA AND NKYLOH
CONAKRY FOR POL; USAID FOR AADAMS
FREETOWN FOR POL AND USAID
MONROVIA FOR OFDA AND FFP
NAIROBI FOR OFDA/EARO
EUCOM FOR POLA/J3/J4/J5
BRUSSELS FOR USAID PLERNER
NEW YORK FOR TMALY

STATE FOR PRM, AF/W, IO
NSC FOR JMELINE
USAID FOR USAID/A, AFR/AA, AFR/WA
USAID FOR DCHA/OFDA GGOTTLIEB, MMARX, CPRATT
USAID FOR DCHA/AA, DCHA/FFP, DCHA/OTI, DCHA/DG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [IV](#) [LI](#) [PHUM](#) [WFP](#)

SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: ADDRESSING PROTECTION CONCERNS

REF: ABIDJAN 129

Summary

1. (SBU) The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is conducting training sessions for militia groups, as well as the National Armed Forces of Cote d'Ivoire (FANCI) and the Armed Forces of the Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the Geneva Conventions. Protection of civilians in the Zone of Confidence continues to decline. UNICEF has recently expanded its work with children associated with armed forces (CAAF), opening a center in Man, in addition to the existing center in Bouake. Young CAAF girls experience particularly difficult reintegration challenges. Rates of pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections are high among young girls in the west. The U.N. Mission in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) troops are charged with the mandate of protecting civilians under imminent threat under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1528, however the fulfillment of that mandate has been disappointing and confusing to many in the humanitarian community. Clarification regarding UNOCI's capabilities in this respect, especially in and around the Zone of Confidence, would be helpful. There is an overall lack of coordination in the protection sector. The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is probably best placed to take on this task. End Summary.

Background

2. (U) USAID/DCHA/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) Principal Regional Advisor (PRA) visited Abidjan February 13-19 to follow up on the protection issues discussed in refel. She met with the ICRC, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and U.N. agencies, as well as the Human Rights Division Chief of the UNOCI to understand better what is currently being done to address the multitude of protection concerns that permeate the country and continue to worsen. What follows is an array of measures that are being taken to address various protection issues. It is by no means an exhaustive composite.

Combatants Training in International Humanitarian Law

3. (SBU) Following the violence that occurred in Abidjan in November 2004 and ICRC's inability to access some of the injured, it began training sessions with various militia groups in IHL and the Geneva Conventions, including the Red Cross/Red Crescent's role in a conflict zone. The ICRC specified that human rights training is not included. In Abidjan, attendees have included the Jeunes Patriotes (JP) and the FESCI, a student's organization. ICRC said it had not yet been successful in engaging the Group of Patriots

for Peace (GPP), another militia group based in Abidjan. ICRC is also holding the same trainings in Guiglo, in the west, and in Gagnoa, located in the south, where ICRC recently opened an office due to the growing protection concerns in the area.

14. (U) There is general agreement among the humanitarian community that the number of militias is growing while the government's ability to control them is declining. During the second week of February, Ble Goude, the leader of the JP, visited Guiglo, Tai (south of Guiglo), Toulepleu, Douekue, and Blolekin. He held rallies in each town, traveling by helicopter. On 28 February, the ceasefire was violated near Logouale, south of Man, by a militia group called the Ivoirian Movement for the Liberation of the West Cote d'Ivoire (MILOCI). Most of the 15,000 displaced that fled to the Duekoue area after the Logouale incident have yet to return to their home villages. Reconciliation efforts have been difficult and tense, reports the U.N. The growing number of arms in the west is also cause for concern.

15. (SBU) For years, the ICRC has been conducting the same kind of sessions with the FANCI. According to ICRC, the FANCI is updating its manual for soldiers and is planning a training seminar to review it. It has asked the ICRC to participate as an advisor in the review of the manual. FANCI's Chief of Staff Colonel Mangou himself made the request.

16. (SBU) The ICRC began similar sessions in Bouake for the FAFN after the conflict began in 2002. The training occurs regularly in Bouake and has begun in Korhogo and Man, as well. Initially, the FAFN were composed of many former members of the FANCI so there was some awareness of ICRC and the responsibilities of belligerents in an armed conflict. As time has passed, however, the FAFN command and control has declined and with it has come a deterioration in behavior. The FAFN recently reorganized and increased the number of zones in the north in an effort to address its problems. The ICRC delegations in Man and Bouake are also trying to engage the Dozo, traditional hunters and fighters.

17. (SBU) ICRC is currently in discussions with the police and the Ministry of Security about how to develop a training-of-the-trainers program for police, which would be a similar program encompassing IHL and the Geneva Conventions. It has already begun the same training with the gendarmes.

18. (SBU) Even though visiting jails is part of ICRC's core mandate, the delegate told the PRA that ICRC is paying special attention to what is happening in the jails these days - in the north, as well as the south - as such visits provide openings for discussion about the behavior of combatants.

----- Protection in the Zone of Confidence -----

19. (SBU) The Zone of Confidence (ZC) presents its own challenges as it is not clear who is legally in charge of the zone. The western part of the ZC is the most insecure area of the country. There is no civil administration and no judicial system in the ZC, and UNOCI does not have the legal authority to take charge of law and order, however this is not understood by all. On 31 March, UNOCI issued a press statement saying that it is under constant solicitation to solve human rights violations in the ZC, which underlines the urgency to accelerate the return of a civil administration.

110. (U) Once a week, ICRC staff makes a tour in the west and in the western part of the ZC. Their continued presence, along with other humanitarian organizations, serves as a protection measure. The ICRC is also working in the north with the National Red Cross in teaching them how to tend to the wounded.

----- Protecting Children Associated with Armed Forces (CAAF) -----

111. (U) UNICEF has been working in Bouake to demobilize children since October 2003. On 19 February, it expanded its program to Man, after two postponements due to renewed violence. The official launch followed a weeklong series of training workshops for some 50 civilian and military partners, including 17 women, in the Man/Danane area. UNICEF's Prevention, Demobilization and Reinsertion (PDR) program will function initially through two Transition and Orientation Centers (TOCs) in Man for the demobilization and reinsertion of children associated with armed forces (CAAF), including girls. A TOC for girls already existed in Man and currently is providing care for some 70 girls, and eight of their children. There are also four TOCs in Bouake - two for boys and two for girls. UNICEF relayed that the girls are especially stigmatized as many of them have had children with soldiers and some also are HIV positive.

¶12. (U) With its partners International Rescue Committee, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Save the Children Alliance, and the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNICEF hopes to create a common front for advocacy to end the use and/or implication of children in regular and irregular paramilitary and political groups. UNICEF admits it is a daily struggle. In addition, UNICEF partners closely with several national NGOs, as it tries to augment the capacity of local groups to address these issues.

¶13. (U) Save the Children/UK (SCF/UK) is also working with CAAF. SCF/UK has identified 27 villages in the two major departments in the west (Moyen Cavally and 18 Montagnes) where there are a number of CAAF. It is currently working

in fourteen of the 27 villages (with ECHO funding) and is looking for funding for the other thirteen to assist in the reintegration process. Demilitarized children face special problems in reintegration, says SCF/UK, especially those who were working with the FAFN and return to a government-controlled village or girls who were "wives" of commanders. SCF/UK assists in tracing, and in providing non-formal education, including literacy, and recreational activities. It also works with each village to form a protection committee to help change attitudes towards these children.

Young Girls at Risk

¶14. (U) The rates of pregnancies and sexually transmitted infection (STI) remain high, particularly in the west, even though SCF/UK does report a small diminution in the rates over the last few months. Working in and around Bolekin (west of Guiglo), SCF/UK reports in the six months between August and January it received 716 pregnant women in its pre-natal clinic. 39 percent of them were younger than age 19. Of this 39 percent, 74 percent of them were experiencing their first pregnancy, 13 percent were in their second pregnancy, 10 percent in their third pregnancy, and 3 percent were already mothers of three children, not yet 19 years old, and in their fourth pregnancy. Twenty seven percent of the young pregnant girls also had one or more sexually transmitted infections (STIs). STIs rank as the number three problem in SCF/UK's mobile clinics, just below malaria and acute respiratory infections.

UNOCI's Protection of Civilians

¶15. (U) The PRA also met with the Chief of UNOCI's Human Rights (HR) Division to discuss its efforts in protection. Under U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1528 of 27 February 2004, which established the UNOCI operation under Chapter VII, UNOCI was given the mandate of protection for U.N. personnel, institutions, and civilians under imminent threat. Section 6.i. of UNSC 1528 states, " . . . without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of National Reconciliation, [UNOCI is] to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment."

¶16. (U) The PRA was interested in discussing this section of the mandate with UNOCI as several humanitarian organizations have expressed frustration that UNOCI is not doing enough to protect citizens. As described in reftel, in late December there was an incident in the ZC where a UNOCI contingent was 500 meters from a village that was attacked and rather than responding themselves, it called for the French Licorne force to assist. The attackers killed a villager that worked for an international NGO and accused the NGO of providing arms to the other side.

¶17. (SBU) The HR chief explained that his office works closely with UNOCI's civilian police unit, but does not report to the military. After some investigation in his office of the U.N. documents supporting UNOCI's mission, the chief clarified that the civilian protection mandate comes under the troops' authority and does not come under his division or that of the civilian police. His HR officers investigate the numerous allegations of human rights abuses, such as the FAFN's new effort for fundraising: kidnapping several villagers and holding them for ransom. Responding to attacks on villages or individuals rests with UNOCI troops.

Comment

¶18. (U) The last eight words of the quoted mandate above in para 15 are critical to note. If an UNOCI contingent does not feel it has the capabilities to respond, it may either call the French Licorne (which may or may not be close) or

do nothing. Nor does UNOCI have the mandate to respond unless the threat to civilians is imminent. This crucially conditional response--however understandable--needs to be clarified for all humanitarian aid workers in CI so that their expectations are lowered about UNOCI's actions, or lack thereof, as confusion still exists on this point. It is also confusing for the frightened villagers who may have an UNOCI post nearby. And the misunderstanding adds tensions to an already tense atmosphere.

19. (U) The lack of response from UNOCI has a reverberating effect on the citizens' confidence in the overall security situation. The less confident they feel, the less likely they are to walk to their fields to plant, to go to market, or to go to a health center, which has a long-term detrimental effect on their food security and general welfare.

20. (U) Lastly, a critical gap is a lack of coordination in the protection sector. As seen above, various organizations are trying to do their part, but no one is identifying gaps, asking particular organizations to try to address certain problems, or looking at the entire fabric of protection problems. As readers can see, the landscape is vast, and many issues have not been addressed in this cable. Even ICRC lamented the poor coordination and lack of action in this sector.

21. (U) OCHA is the most likely candidate to fill this role, as it is doing the same in other countries, such as Sudan. (Note: OCHA head Besida Tonwe works closely with Deputy SRSG/Humanitarian Coordinator/UNDP chief Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, who oversees the entire UN humanitarian operation in Cote d'Ivoire. End note.) OCHA is already chairing protection meetings in Abidjan where information is shared, but much more is needed. OCHA recently filled the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Advisor post that had been vacant for months. It is hoped that this person

will also assume responsibility for protection issues--not only for IDPs, but also for all Ivoirians and third country nationals that have been targets of violence--and vigorously pursue appropriate actions. End comment.

Parting Shot

22. (U) As a poignant reflection of how sensitive and upside down some issues have become in Cote d'Ivoire, UNICEF relayed that some Ivoirian government authorities questioned UNICEF's promotion of birth certificates for all children, accusing it of being a ploy to engender Ivoirian nationality for third country nationals.

VALLE